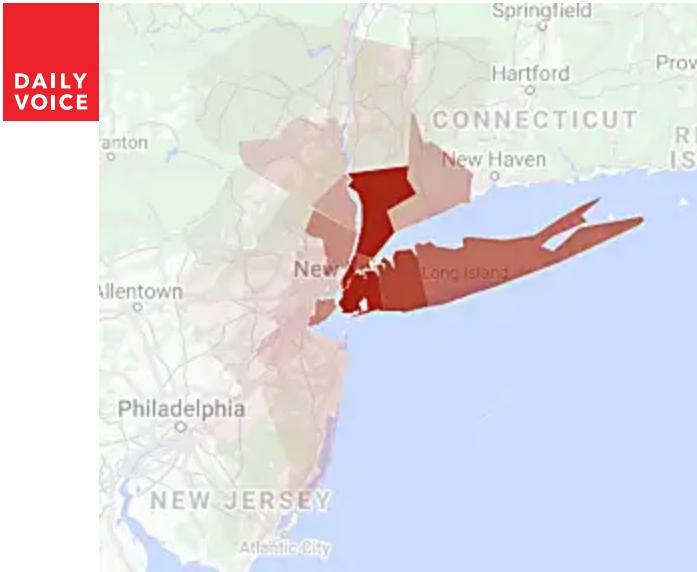




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NEWS

Strip-Search Groping, Sex Exchanged For Sanitary Pads: Female NJ Inmates Detail Abuse By Guards



Cecilia Levine 07/02/2020 1:25 p.m.



Groped. Sexually assaulted. Ordered to perform sexual favors in exchange for basic needs.

That's how guards at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women in Hunterdon County treated female inmates, six former inmates testified during a hearing Wednesday in Trenton.

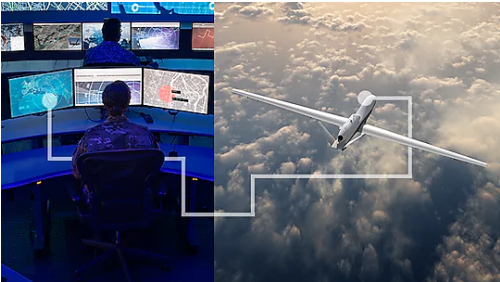
The hearing was the fourth held by the Workgroup on Harassment, Sexual Assault and Misogyny in New Jersey Politics, founded in January by Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg (D-Bergen).

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The U.S. Justice Department found decades-long sexual abuse at the prison, according to a **report released earlier this year.**

https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/USDOJUSAO/2020/04/13/file_attachments/1425834/CRIPA.Report.pdf. Despite the arrests of several of the corrections officers, the abuse continued -- and efforts to fix things proved futile.

Weinberg sought to hear accounts of women who faced sexual harassment and misconduct in local and state politics and government. On Wednesday, Weinberg got just that.



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By **Northrop Grumman**

Alyssa Feldman was serving a six-month sentence during the time she said she was sexually assaulted by a corrections officer who had access to the cottage she was assigned to.

He let himself in whenever he wanted, she said.

"He was king of that cottage," Feldman said, noting that the officer threatened to delay her parole if she didn't follow orders.

Despite her short sentence, it was clear how things worked around there, she said.

"It was so open," she said, "so much corruption."

Marianne Brown said she was serving a 21-year sentence for kidnapping when she asked a guard for a roll of toilet paper, stored among stacks in a room at the facility.

"What are you going to do for me?" he replied, according to Brown.

It took a few moments, but Brown quickly realized what he meant: "Are you going to give them oral sex?" she testified.

A teary-eyed Melissa Deandino, who was released from the prison three years ago, said she suffers from post-traumatic stress as a result of her sentence at the prison.

Now homeless, Deandino said she has a fear of men and suffers paranoia after being physically, mentally and sexually assaulted by the Edna Mahan guards.

"If it takes every ounce of my being to show everybody how messed up that place was, I will do it," Deandino said. "Something needs to change, because it can't keep on going like this."

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